DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 219 JC 930 427

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TITLE	Educator's Peer Instructional Consulting (EPIC) Project.
INSTITUTION	Cuyahoga Community Coll., Cleveland, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY	Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	31 Aug 90
CONTRACT	G008730453
NOTE	10p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; Collegiality; Community Colleges; Full Time Faculty; Instructional Improvement; Master Teachers; *Mentors; Part Time Faculty; *Professional Development; Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Orientation; Teaching Experience; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Cuyahoga Community College OH; *Educators Peer Instructional Consulting Proj

ABSTRACT

To develop an effective method for experienced, full-time faculty to mentor new, part-time faculty, Cuyahoga Community College (CCC), in Ohio, initiated the 3-year Educator's Peer Instructional Consulting (EPIC) project in September 1987. EPIC was designed to allow new faculty to quickly learn essential information about the college, their division, students, and available resources, and full-time faculty to benefit from the non-teaching experiences of new teachers. At the beginning of each new term, volunteer full-time faculty were sought to work with no more than three new teachers. Mentor pairs were provided with handbooks on mentoring and faculty responsibilities and met formally at least three times during the term, keeping journals describing their activities and reactions during the mentoring. In the first 3 years of implementation, 379 new part-time faculty (almost 90% of the new part-time hires during the period) were mentored by about 100 full-time faculty. Most faculty reported an increase in the quality of course syllabi, better understanding of college policies and procedures, and an increase in the use of teaching materials. Division heads also reported improvements in the areas of faculty understanding of college policies and reduction of student complaints. Based on project outcomes, CCC began full funding for the EPIC project in September 1991. (MAB)

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ED 362 219

EDUCATOR'S PEER INSTRUCTIONAL CONSULTING (EPIC) PROJECT

Cuyahoga Community College
700 Carnegie Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

Grant Number:

G008730453

Project Dates:

Starting Date: September 1, 1987
Ending Date: August 31, 1990
Number of Months: 36

Project Director:

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FIPSE Program Officer(s): (Ed Golin)

Grant Award:

Year 1	$33,960
Year 2	$22,617
Year 3	$ 9,672
TOTAL	$66,249

JC 930 427

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The Educators Peer Instructional Consulting (EPIC) Project was designed to provide a method for experienced full-time faculty to interact with new part-time faculty, in such a way that the new part-time person would quickly and effectively learn essential information about the college, the division, the students, the course, and the resosurces available; the experienced full-time person would benefit from non-teaching experiences which the part-time person would bring to the relationship. Over the three year period of the grant, 379 new part-time faculty were paired with over 100 full-time faculty. There has been overwhelming acceptance of the program by both project participants and their first line academic administrators (Division Heads). The College has institutionalized the project by providing full funding for the fourth year of operation.

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EDUCATOR'S PEER INSTRUCTIONAL CONSULTING (EPIC) PROJECT

Cuyahoga Community College
700 Carnegie Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

Donald L. Hoyt, Project Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Project Overview

The project started as a result of several meetings which were held to address the special problems of part-time faculty teaching at off-campus locations. They identified issues of alienation from the college and faculty, lack of support and resources, and dissatisfied students. As discussions progressed it became apparent that almost all new part-time faculty has the same feelings, even those who were teaching on a campus. It was also suggested that the part-time people were bringing to the college a wealth of "real life" experience from the world of work, the arts, sciences, etc,. Consequently, the claim was made that both parties in a paired relationship between full-time experienced faculty and new part-time faculty would jointly benefit from a mutual consulting relationship. In the first year of the DOE funded project, 41 full-time faculty were paired with 123 new part-timers; in the second year, 63 full-time faculty were paired with 131 part-timers, and in the third (final FIPSE funded) year 55 full-time faculty were matched with 125 new part-time faculty. The Project Director has presented at six major conferences, over one thousand copies of the EPIC Handbook have been distributed at the conferences and by mail. Cuyahoga Community College, has instituionalized the program and it is now funded from the College's general fund account.

B. Purpose.

The purpose of the Educator's Peer Instrucional Consulting (EPIC) Project was to assist new part-time faculty in "becoming a part of the college" and to allow the full-time faculty member to become better aquainted with the real world of work, the arts, sciences so that subject area content would be current and useful.

C. Background and origins.

Cuyahoga has a high percentage of part-time faculty members. In the past it has often taken several academic quarters of teaching for the part-time person to feel comfortable that they are really part of the college and that they are competent teachers. In a series of meetings the concept emerged of a mutually interactive consulting relationship between full-and part-time faculty in which both parties would benefit. The concept was pilot tested in two divisions at one of our three campuses for a year. The results were sufficiently encouraging that the college felt it could make such a program work across the entire college district.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

D. Project Description.

At the beginning of each academic term, participating Division Heads would solicit volunteers from among their experienced faculty to "mentor" new part-time faculty. The full-time people were given a minor reduction in their teaching load for this effort.

Each participating faculty member was provided with an EPIC Handbook The faculty pairs were to meet on a formally scheduled basis a minimum of three times during the term. They were also given a copy of the Part Time Faculty Handbook. They were to review this material, and the full-time person was to provide clarification for anything the part-time person needed. Besides the formal meetings, they were expected to exchange both home and work phone numbers and each was to share information on when they would be available for informal consultations.

Another expectation was that each participant was to keep a journal in which they would describe their activities. The journals helped make some very minor adjustments in the program. And, a number of suggestions were provided from which seminars were developed and offered.

E. Project Results.

This project has been (and continues to be) a resounding success. As noted previously, over the three year period of the grant 379 new part-time faculty (almost 90% of the new part-time hires during that period) were "mentored" by about 100 full-time faculty.

In a more formal mode, the full-time faculty participants and the participating Division Heads were asked to evaluate the program along a number of dimensions.

Most faculty reported an increase in the quality of course syllabi, better understanding of college policies and procedures, and an increase in the use of teaching materials. From the Division Head perspective, improvements were noted in the areas of understanding college policies and reduced student complaints. It is clear that the respondents were convinced that the part-time faculty participants benefited greatly by the experience.

Starting in September 1991, the college has provided full funding for the program from the colleges general fund, and will continue to do so into the forseeable future.

F. Summary and conclusions.

The project was very successful as demonstrated by: (1) number of both full and part-time participants, (2) anecdotal reports in journals, (3) reduction in student complaints, (4) increased quality in part-time faculty course syllabi, and (5) institutional commitment to continue the program.

FINAL REPORT

A. Project Overview

The project started as a result of several meetings which were held with part-time faculty to address the special problems of part-time faculty teaching at off-campus locations. They identified issues such as a sense of alienation from the college and faculty, lack of support and resources, and dissatisfied students. There were reports by Division Heads that the number of student complaints was disproportionately high at off-campus sites. One method suggested for addressing the issues was to provide each part-time faculty member with an experienced full-time faculty as a "mentor". However, as discussions progressed it became apparent that almost all new part-time faculty had the same feelings, even those who were teaching on a campus in close proximity with their full-time colleagues. It was also suggested that in spite of their lack of knowledge of the college, the students, and in many cases of teaching, the part-time people were bringing to the college a wealth of "real life" experience from the world of work, the arts, sciences, etc, that many full-time faculty members had not directly experienced in some time. Consequently, the claim was made that both parties in a paired relationship between full-time experienced faculty and new part-time faculty would jointly benefit from a mutual consulting relationship. Hence after pilot testing the idea on one of the three campuses for a year, it was decided to approach FIPSE to fund such a project. In the first year of the DOE funded project, 41 full-time faculty were paired with 123 new part-timers; in the second year, 63 full-time faculty were paired with 131 part-timers, and in the third (final FIPSE funded) year 55 full-time faculty were matched with 125 new part-time faculty (numbers for part-time are unduplicated; those for full-time are not unduplicated). Information about this project has been widely disseminated throughout the nation: the Project Director has presented at six major conferences, over one thousand copies of the EPIC Handbook have been distributed at the conferences and by mail, and several dozens of requests for information have been responded to. It would seem safe to presume that at least some of the many mentoring projects which have sprung up in the last three years for part-time faculty, were stimulated as a result of this project and these dissemination efforts. A final positive outcome of the project is that the sponsoring institution, Cuyahoga Community College, has institutionalized the program and it is now funded from the College's general fund account.

B. Purpose.

The purpose of the Educator's Peer Instrucional Consulting (EPIC) Project was to assist new part-time faculty in "becoming a part of the college" by helping them to know a full-time faculty member well as a "mentor", to understand the college better, to gain a better understanding of the

students, and to improve the quality of their instruction; but in addition, to allow the full-time faculty member to become better acquainted with a part-timer who is intimately involved in the community through the world of work, the arts, sciences etc., so that the full-time person's knowlege of the subject area content would be current and useful.

C. Background and origins.

As with many community colleges in the U.S., Cuyahoga has a high percentage of part-time faculty members (385 full-time; 850 part-time). In the past it has often taken several academic quarters of teaching for the part-time person to feel comfortable that they are really part of the college and that they are competent teachers. In a series of meetings attended by both part-time and full-time faculty and administrators responsible for part-time faculty, the concept emerged of a mutually interactive consulting relationship between full-and part-time faculty in which both parties would benefit. It was hoped that the new part-time persons would more quickly feel part of the college and become better instructors, and that the relationship would encourage the full-time people to keep current in their fields. The concept was pilot tested in two divisions at one of our three campuses for a year before applying for FIPSE funding to support a district-wide project. The results were sufficiently encouraging that the college felt it could make such a program work across the entire college district.

D. Project Description.

At the beginning of each academic term, participating Division Heads would solicit volunteers from among their experienced (i.e., tenured) faculty to "mentor" new part-time faculty. (The term "mentor" has never been part of the official terminology used in the grant applications, with the faculty or staff, or in conference presentations; however, in spite of efforts to down play this part of the relationship, the term quickly became the common description of the program, both locally and nationally.) Each full-time faculty was permitted to work with no more than three part-time faculty during any one term, and the full-time people were given a minor reduction in their teaching load for this effort. The new part-time person was given no additional compensation for participating, since by policy they are obliged to participate in at least one faculty develpment activity in each term they teach, and this was considered their primary development activity for their first term of teaching.

Each participating faculty member was provided with an EPIC Handbook (attached appendix 1) which spelled out in detail the expectations of the relationship. The faculty pairs were to meet on a formally scheduled basis a minimum of three times during the term, usually before the term began, or very shortly thereafter. They were given a copy of the Part-Time Faculty Handbook which contains copies of all relevant college policies and procedures, information about the college and the campus or off-campus site where they would be teaching, as well as a

section on teaching tips. They were to review this material, and the full-time person was to provide clarification for anything the part-time person needed. Other topics they were expected to cover included adult learning, student demographics/backgrounds/expectations/needs, use of teaching materials, and any other matters in which either perceived a need for assistance or clarification. Besides the formal meetings, they were expected to exchange both home and work phone numbers and each was to share information on when they would be available for informal consultations. The full-time participants were given specific instructions to treat the part-timer with the same respect as they would any other peer or colleague, and to make them feel as much at home in the college environment as they possibly could. If specific issues arose which could not be handled in this consulting relationship, each partner was encouraged to contact the Project Director or their Division Head. (The infrequency for the need for this was remarkable!) As might be expected, many of these relationships have continued beyond the formal time limit of one term, and the participants continue to be helpful to each other.

Another expectation was that each participant was to keep a journal in which they would describe their activities. The journals were used for two purposes: 1) to assist in the evaluation of the program but not the individual faculty member; 2) to assist the Faculty Development Office in designing workshops and seminars for the part-time faculty. Both were useful. The journals helped make some very minor adjustments in the program (e.g., "don't let it become bureaucratic - it will only continue to work if it remains fairly informal"). And, a number of suggestions were provided from which seminars were developed and offered. Among them were: The Adult Learner; Test Construction and Grading; and Teaching Tips for New Instructors.

During the early phase of the project, the committee which had originally been instrumental in the development of the idea, was active in monitoring the progress of the program. However, as time went on, several of the members left the college to take other positions, others were assigned different responsibilities, and still others had new superiors who did not grant them time to participate. As a result, the Project Director was left without the formal support of a committee structure which had been so helpful in the beginning. However, a new informal support system emerged consisting of many of the actual participants in the progam, which in the long run was probably of more help than would have been a committee made up of people less intimately connected with the realities of the actual program.

E. Project Results.

If number of participants, journal entries, and anecdotal reports are any indication, this project has been (and continues to be) a resounding success. As noted previously, over the three year period of the grant 379 new part-time faculty (almost 90% of the new part-time hires during that period) were "mentored" by about 100 full-time faculty (more than

one fourth of the total). The journal entries consistently pointed out how the part-time faculty were improving as a result of the consulting relationship. Many of the Division Heads thought this was the greatest idea and program they had ever seen at the college. The hyperbole notwithstanding, it was reported that there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of student complaints about new part-time faculty, which made the administrators very happy.

In a more formal mode, the full-time faculty participants and the participating Division Heads were asked to evaluate the program along a number of dimensions (sometimes they were asked to fill out an instrument, other times they were interviewed by phone). They were asked, "As a result of the pairing of experienced full-time faculty in a consulting relationship with new part-time instructors, how do this year's new part-time faculty compare with previous new part-timers in the following ways":

Frequencey of student complaints
Quality of course syllabi
Use of teaching technologies
Part time faculty complaints
Effectiveness of grading procedures
Understanding of college policies
Use of course materials

Most faculty reported an increase in the quality of course syllabi, better understanding of college policies and procedures, and an increase in the use of teaching materials. Further, the Division Heads of the major departments participating in the project were asked to evaluate the project on the dimensions of predicted change indicated in the original proposal, and the results are shown in the following table:

Frequency of student complaints	2.875
Quality of course syllabi	3.294
Use of teaching technologies	3.266
Part-time faculty complaints	2.785
Effectiveness of grading procedures	3.250
Understanding of college policy	3.588
Use of course materials	3.600

Table 1 - Improvements in current new part-time faculty over former new part-time faculty as judged by Division Heads (on a 4 point scale)

As can be seen from this table, the greatest perceived performance improvements were in the areas of the use of course materials, and the use of teaching technologies. Also improved were the quality of course syllabi and understanding of college policy. It is clear that at the very least, the respondents were convinced that the part-time faculty participants benefited greatly by the experience. That perception is shared by the Project Director who has spoken with dozens of faculty participants and Division Heads, who have universally praised the program and urged its continuance.

Since this perception is shared college wide, it was not a difficult task to convince the college to continue the program at the conclusion of FIPSE funding. Starting in September 1991, the college has provided full funding for the program from the college's general fund, and will continue to do so into the forseeable future. This has been the major step taken at the completion of FIPSE sponsorship; in addition plans are afoot to republish the Handbook, and to involve additional full-time faculty in the program. The EPIC project is now a regular, accepted, expected, and institutionalized program of the college.

Future plans for dissemination include continuing to respond to external inquiries (which come in at the rate of about one a week) and to include information about the project in two national teleconferences on part-time faculty which are being planned for Spring and Fall 1991. A dissemination grant proposal was submitted to FIPSE in the Spring of 1990,but was not funded.

F. Summary and conclusions.

The Project Director can say without reservation that this project was (and continues to be) superb. My advice to other colleges which have inquired about establishing a similar program is to follow the process described in the EPIC Handbook as much as possible (modified to fit their own special needs, of course) since the experience here is that it works as described. The ideas expressed in the original proposal have changed very little and seem to be very "workable", doable and extremely helpful in integrating part-time faculty into the mainstream of the college.

1106f:Rev. 3/91